

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
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R 141607Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2502
INFO USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GER

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 RABAT 3852

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MASS MO
SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY BENSON'S VISIT TO MOROCCO JULY 3-6

1. UNDER SECRETARY LUCY WILSON BENSON VISITED MOROCCO FOR ORIENTATION PURPOSES JULY 3-6. STAY INCLUDED TOURS OF THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY AND AIR BASE AT MEKNES; AMBASSADOR'S JULY 4 RECEPTION ATTENDED BY REPRESENTATIVE HIGH-RANKING MOROCCANS; WREATH-LAYING AT TOMB OF MOHAMMED V; AND DETAILED AND WIDERANGING CONVERSATIONS WITH ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER AND HIGH MILITARY OFFICERS. MRS. BENSON'S CONTACTS WITH GOM WERE WELCOME INJECTION OF AUTHORITATIVE WASHINGTON VIEWPOINT. HER ASSURANCES OF U.S. INTEREST IN AND DESIRE TO HELP MOROCCO WERE ESPECIALLY APPRECIATED BY MOROCCANS. HIGHLIGHTS OF VISIT FOLLOW:

2. MEKNES: MRS. BENSON WAS FLOWN TO MEKNES IN ONE OF KING'S AIRCRAFT FOR DAY-LONG TOUR OF ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY AND AIR BASE. RESPECTIVE COMMANDING OFFICERS, COLONELS MOHAMED ABROUK AND ABDELAZIZ MRANI, PERSONALLY BRIEFED AND ACCOMPANIED HER ON VISIT. AT AIR BASE, MRS. BENSON INSPECTED F-5 MAINTENANCE FACILITIES AND OBSERVED F-5 FLIGHTS, ALSO LUNCHING WITH PILOTS AND MAINTENANCE OFFICERS. A PERSISTENT THEME ON MOROCCAN SIDE WAS DIFFICULTY OF OBTAINING SPARE PARTS IN TIMELY FASHION, WHICH HAD FORCED REDUCTION OF FLYING HOURS TO ABOUT 15 PER MONTH PER

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PILOT. RELATED COMPLAINT WAS SHORT LEAD-TIME ON CONTRACT OFFERS. GOM WAS OFTEN UNABLE TO PROCESS PAPERWORK BEFORE OFFERS EXPIRED. (COMMENT: DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING SPARE PARTS IN A TIMELY FASHION HAS BEEN DUE TO FOLLOWING: (1) PROGRAM NOT FUNDED BY GOM AT A SUFFICIENT LEVEL TO SUPPORT 22 AIRCRAFT. (2) FOLLOW-ON SPARE PARTS CASE WAS OFFERED TO GOM ON 15 APRIL 1977 BUT NOT SIGNED UNTIL 29 JUNE 1977. ADDITIONALLY, DOWN PAYMENT

IS REQUIRED BEFORE DELIVERIES CAN BE INITIATED, AND THIS HAS NOT YET BEEN ACCOMPLISHED.)

3. WREATH-LAYING: THIS CEREMONY, CONSIDERED DE RIGUER FOR ALL HIGH-RANKING VISITORS, INCLUDED UNUSUAL HONOR OF TOUR OF MOHAMMED V MOSQUE, NORMALLY NOT OPEN TO FOREIGNERS OR WOMEN.

4. JULY 4 RECEPTION: MRS. BENSON HAD CONVERSATIONS WITH WIDE RANGE OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING MINISTERS OF INTERIOR, INFORMATION, COOPERATION, FINANCE, INSPECTOR AND DEPUTY INSPECTOR OF AIR FORCE, AND POLITICAL OPPOSITION LEADERS.

5. DISCUSSIONS ON ARMY PROGRAM: UNDER SECRETARY, ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR, MET ON JULY 5 WITH LT. COL. SALAH DINE, DEPUTY CHIEF OF OPERATIONS AND TRAINING (B-3), IN UNEXPECTED ABSENCE FROM COUNTRY OF B-3 CHIEF COL. ABDELAZIZ BENNANI WHO WAS ORDERED TO NOUAKCHOTT NIGHT BEFORE MEETING TO LOOK INTO POLISARIO RAID OF JULY 3. (AIR FORCE CHIEF COLONEL MOHAMED KABBAJ HAD TO CANCEL MEETING AND DINNER IN HONOR OF MRS. BENSON FOR SAME REASON.) MRS. BENSON EXPLAINED ADMINISTRATION'S NEW POLICY ON ARMS SALES, NOTING THAT PRESIDENT CARTER CONSIDERED THAT U.S. PARTICIPATION IN WORLDWIDE SALES SHOULD BE REDUCED, BUT THAT THIS DID NOT MEAN THE U.S. WOULD FORGET ITS ALLIES AND FRIENDS SUCH AS MOROCCO.

6. SALAH DINE, NOTING LONG TIES OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION
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BETWEEN MOROCCO AND U.S., DESCRIBED U.S. TRAINING AS HAVING ALWAYS BEEN EXCELLENT. ARRIVAL OF NEW M-48A 5 TANKS SCHEDULED FOR JULY 77 HAD BEEN DELAYED TO SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER. PERSONNEL WHO WOULD OPERATE TANKS HAD COMPLETED TRAINING BY MOROCCAN CADRES PREVIOUSLY TRAINED BY THE U.S. ARMY MOBILE TRAINING TEAM, AND WERE IN PLACE AWAITING THE EQUIPMENT. MRS. BENSON SAID SHE WOULD CHECK INTO THE MATTER ON RETURN TO WASHINGTON. (COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE CONTRACT INDICATED DELIVERY IN JULY 77, GOM WAS FOUR MONTHS LATE IN MAKING PAYMENT. ACCORDING TO THE CONTRACT, ESTIMATED DELIVERY DATE WOULD BE EXTENDED BY FOUR MONTHS. IN FALL 1976, LTG FISH, DIRECTOR, DSAA, EXPLAINED TO HIGH MOROCCAN OFFICIALS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONTRACT SIGNING AND CONTRACT IMPLEMENTATION DATE. IMPLEMENTATION DATE IS THE DATE OF PAYMENT, WHICH DETERMINES ESTIMATED DELIVERY DATE.)

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7. ASKED ABOUT PERCEPTION OF THREAT TO MOROCCO, SALAH DINE EMPHASIZED THAT THREAT CAME FROM ALGERIA, NOT SPAIN. MOROCCO WOULD NEVER ATTACK ANOTHER COUNTRY NOR USE U.S. ARMS IN ANY WAY WHICH WOULD EMBARRASS THE U.S. WHILE MOROCCO HAD MEANS INITIALLY TO COUNTER ANY ENEMY THREAT, GOM MIGHT HAVE TO CALL ON THE U.S. FOR AMMUNITION RESUPPLY IF FIGHTING BECAME INTENSE AND OF LONG DURATION. ALSO, IF A "FOREIGN COUNTRY" (I.E., ALGERIA) CONDUCTED ATTACKS AGAINST TARGETS IN MOROCCO, MOROCCO WOULD BE REQUIRED TO RESPOND IN KIND. MRS. BENSON SAID THAT SHE UNDERSTOOD THIS SERIOUS PROBLEM, THAT THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF MOROCCO WAS OF COURSE OF GREAT INTEREST TO THE U.S., AND THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD CONTINUE TO COOPERATE WITH ONE OF ITS OLDEST FRIENDS IN DEVELOPING A CREDIBLE DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY. SALAH DINE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY'S COMMENTS AND CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT KING WAS A WISE RULER, THAT HE PREFERRED KEEPING OPEN A DIALOGUE AND CONTINUING THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION WITH HIS ADVERSARY, BUT THAT UNFORTUNATELY "MOROCCO'S NEIGHBOR TO THE EAST" HAD NO INTEREST IN HAVING A DIALOGUE.

8. FOREIGN MINISTRY BRIEFING; ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER AHMED CHERKAOUI BRIEFED MRS. BENSON JULY 5 ON MOROCCAN FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNAL SITUATION AND GAVE LUNCH IN HER HONOR ATTENDED BY RANKING FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS. FOCUSING ON SAHARA ISSUE,
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CHERKAOUI CHARACTERIZED RAID ON NOUAKCHOTT AS "VERY SERIOUS" AND EXPRESSED MOROCCO'S HOPE THAT FRIENDS SUCH AS U.S. WOULD COUNSEL MODERATION ON THE ALGERIANS (RABAT 3693). HE ALSO STRESSED MOROCCAN DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN SOVEREIGNTY IN THE SAHARA, WHATEVER THE COST. MEANWHILE, KING HASSAN HAD REMAINED RECEPTIVE TO A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF DIFFERENCES WITH ALGERIA,

BUT THE LATTER HAD REJECTED NUMEROUS MEDIATION ATTEMPTS. ONE OF RECENT MEDIATORS, GUINEA, HAD BEEN INFORMED THAT MOROCCO WAS READY TO IMPLEMENT SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE SAHARA. HOWEVER, WHEN MOROCCAN VIEWS HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO ALGERIANS, GUINEANS HAD FOUND GOA COMPLETELY NEGATIVE. GUINEA HAD THEREFORE BEGUN TO TAKE MORE BALANCED APPROACH ON THE ISSUE.

9. ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS, CHERKAOUI SAID MOROCCO HAD BEEN OPTIMISTIC AND HAD WELCOMED STATEMENTS OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION ON SUCH ISSUES AS HOMELAND FOR PALESTINIANS AND NEED FOR SUBSTANTIAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM TERRITORIES OCCUPIED SINCE 1967. NOW, HOWEVER, ISRAELI ELECTIONS HAD PRODUCED MUCH MORE INTRANSIGENT REGIME. GOM WAS THEREFORE ANXIOUSLY AWAITING BEGIN'S JULY 19 VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND HOPED THAT USG WOULD PERSIST IN SEEKING A JUST SETTLEMENT. MRS. BENSON EMPHASIZED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS DETERMINED TO PRESS AHEAD WITH PEACE EFFORTS. ONE SIGN OF SERIOUSNESS WAS PRESIDENT'S RECENT INSTRUCTION TO HIGH OFFICIALS TO REFRAIN FROM SPECULATION PENDING BEGIN VISIT.

10. ON AFRICA, CHERKAOUI SAW PICTURE AS "NOT BRIGHT". SOVIETS HAD MADE NUMEROUS INROADS AND OBVIOUSLY HAD FURTHER PROJECTS. SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA POSED SERIOUS PROBLEMS, AND AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC MOVES, INCLUDING 5-POWER EFFORTS ON NAMIBIA AND ANGLO-AMERICAN STEPS VIS-A-VIS RHODESIA, WERE WELCOMED BY GOM. TENSIONS WERE MOUNTING IN THE HORN. SOVIET-BACKED ETHIOPIA HAD MADE THREATS AGAINST THE SUDAN OVER THAT COUNTRY'S
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SUPPORT FOR AN INDEPENDENT ERITREA. ETHIOPIAN-SOMALIAN TENSIONS ALSO REMAINED HIGH. IN NORTH AFRICA, MOROCCO WAS CONCERNED OVER LIBYAN-EGYPTIAN FRICTION, WHICH HAD REPORTEDLY RESULTED IN SOME BORDER CLASHES IN LAST FEW DAYS.

11. MRS. BENSON EXPRESSED USG SATISFACTION AND APPRECIATION OVER SUCCESS OF MOROCCAN INTERVENTION IN STABILIZING THE SITUATION IN ZAIRE. SHE COMMENTED THAT IN ORDER TO PRESERVE GAINS, ZAIRE REQUIRED EXTENSIVE REFORMS. CHERKAOUI INDICATED THAT KING HASSAN, IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH MOBUTU, HAD STRONGLY URGED RAPID AND WIDESPREAD REFORMS, AND THAT MOBUTU APPEARED TO UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR MOVING AHEAD DECISIVELY. MOROCCO WAS WILLING TO ASSIST ZAIRE, BY DISPATCHING TECHNICIANS, FOR EXAMPLE.

12. TURNING TO INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS, CHERKAOUI VIEWED RECENT ELECTORAL PROCESS CULMINATING IN ELECTION OF PARLIAMENT IN JUNE AS HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT. HE SAID PARLIAMENT NOW SCHEDULED TO CONVENE IN OCTOBER, AND THAT A NEW GOVERNMENT WAS EXPECTED TO BE FORMED IN LATE AUGUST, OR POSSIBLE EARLY SEPTEMBER.

13. CALL ON SECRETARY GENERAL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE ADMINISTRATION: COLONEL MOHAMED ACHAHBAR RECEIVED MRS. BENSON JULY 5. AKSED FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF THREAT TO MOROCCO, ACHAHBAR STRESSED MOROCCO'S ADHERENCE TO FREE WORLD AND ITS ANTI-COMMUNISM. BOTH POLITICAL AND MILITARY RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. WERE EXCELLENT. AS TO THREAT, MOROCCO'S ENEMIES WERE DOING THEIR BEST TO PREVENT MOROCCO FROM CONCENTRATING ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS. WHILE KING WAS WILLING TO DIVERT FUNDS FROM DEVELOPMENT TO EQUIP ARMED FORCES ONLY WHEN ESSENTIAL, MOROCCAN MILITARY MUST BE ABLE TO DEFEND THE COUNTRY. BECAUSE OF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND FACT THAT MOROCCO WAS SMALL COUNTRY WITHOUT OIL, IT HAD TO TURN TO FRIENDS FOR HELP. MILITARY PURCHASES WERE, HOWEVER, STRICTLY FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES.

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14. ACHAHBAR WARMLY WELCOMED PRESIDENT CARTER'S POLICY OF LIMITING ARMS SALES, AND SAW ITS SUCCESS AS DEPENDENT ON WILLINGNESS OF OTHER ARMS SUPPLIERS TO COOPERATE. HE VIEWED MRS. BENSON'S VISIT AS CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF U.S. INTEREST IN MOROCCO. HE ALSO EXPRESSED FULL SATISFACTION WITH COOPERATION WITH MUSLO. ACHAHBAR NOTED THAT TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS SIGNED WITH U.S. TO DATE WAS \$750 MILLION, WITH ALL ORDERS BASED ON 1973 MODERNIZATION PLAN OF JOINT US-MOROCCAN TEAM. (NOTE: THIS WAS THE PARTAIN REPORT, A U.S. EFFORT.) PLAN HAD BEEN THOROUGHLY STUDIED BEFORE IMPLEMENTATION WAS BEGUN AND WAS NOT RELATED TO CURRENT EVENTS. HAVING A LARGE TERRITORY, MOROCCO REQUIRED ARMED FORCES OF THE SIZE PROJECTED BY THE PLAN. MOROCCAN RELIANCE ON A PROFESSIONAL ARMY ENTAILED HIGH COSTS, PARTICULARLY WITH REQUIRED EMPHASIS ON IMPROVED MATERIEL RATHER THAN INCREASED PERSONNEL. U.S. ROLE AS LEADER IN TECHNOLOGY WAS IMPORTANT FACTOR IN MOROCCO'S LOOKING TO U.S. FOR ASSISTANCE.

15. MRS. BENSON RESPONDED THAT USG FULLY APPRECIATIVE OF DEFENSE NEEDS OF MOROCCO, AS WELL AS NEEDS IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FIELDS. SHE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN PURSUING IN WASHINGTON QUESTION OF HOW USG COULD IMPROVE ITS METHODS OF ASSISTING MOROCCO.

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16. ACHAHBAR NOTED LONG PRODUCTION LEAD TIMES BETWEEN SIGNATURE OF CONTRACTS AND DELIVERIES OF EQUIPMENT. M-113 APC CONTRACTS SIGNED IN 1973 AND 1974 ENVISAGED DELIVERIES SPREAD OUT UNTIL 1979. PRODUCTION LEAD TIMES WERE ALSO PRESENT IN DELIVERIES OF TANKS AND CHAPARRAL. ACHAHBAR WENT ON TO EXPRESS DESIRE TO USE U.S. METHODS IN OPERATION AND SUPPORT OF U.S. MATERIEL ACQUIRED. HE HOPED PLANS COULD BE INLCUDED FOR TRAINING ON EQUIPMENT PURCHASED AT THE SAME TIME AS ACQUISITION WORKED OUT. HE ALSO VOICED PREFERENCE FOR SENDING TRAINEES TO THE U.S., PARTICULARLY FOR TACTICAL OPERATIONAL TRAINING (AS OPPOSED TO ONLY TECHNICAL TRAINING WHICH HE FELT COULD IN MANY CASES BE CARRIED OUT IN MOROCCO).

17. NOTING ACHAHBAR'S UNDERSTANDING OF PRESIDENT'S POLICY ON ARMS SALES, MRS. BENSON UNDERLINED THAT WHILE PRESIDENT DESIRED TO REDUCE U.S. PARTICIPATION IN WORLD ARMS SALES, HE HAD NO INTENTION OF FORGETTING THE NEEDS OF ALLIES AND FRIENDS OF THE UNITED STATES. ONE WAY OF REDUCING U.S. PARTICIPATION WOULD BE THROUGH REDUCTION OF SALE OF HIGHLY TECHNICAL AND SOPHISTICATED ARMS. TURNING TO MOROCCAN INTEREST IN A-10 AIRCRAFT, MRS. BENSON NOTED THAT THIS AIRCRAFT HAD NOT YET BEEN DEPLOYED WITHIN U.S. FORCES OR SOLD TO OTHER COUNTRIES. CONSEQUENTLY, ANY REQUEST AT THIS TIME TO PURCHASE THE A-10 COULD POSE PROBLEM FOR PRESIDENT'S ARMS SALES POLICY.

18. ASKED FOR EXPLANATION OF GOM'S INTEREST IN THE A-10, ACHAHBAR POINTED TO MOROCCO'S INFERIORITY IN TANKS TO LIBYA'S 700 AND ALGERIA'S 300-400, AND IMPOSSIBILITY OF DEFENDING AGAINST THESE TANKS ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS BECAUSE OF PROHIBITIVE COST OF FUEL, A RESOURCE MOROCCO DOES NOT HAVE. IN GOM VIEW, TEN A-10 AIRCRAFT WERE ONLY FEASIBLE WAY TO COUNTERACT THIS LARGE TANK THREAT, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF LONG DISTANCES INVOLVED WITHIN MOROCCO. HE HOPED USG WOULD CONSIDER MOROCCAN NEEDS WITH

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SYMPATHY.

19. ACHAHBAR ALSO POINTED OUT THAT \$750 MILLION FIGURE HE HAD CITED INCLUDED MORE THAN MILITARY HARDWARE, E.G., CONTRACT FOR RADAR SYSTEM WITH WESTINGHOUSE. MOROCCO WISHED TO USE CREDITS FOR THIS PURCHASE, NOT ONLY FOR MILITARY REASONS BUT ALSO TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH U.S. THIS RADAR SYSTEM, HOWEVER, WAS CONSIDERED BY USG TO BE AN ARTICLE OF WAR AND THEREFORE COMMERCIAL CREDITS WERE NOT POSSIBLE. IN FACT, HOWEVER, SYSTEM PURCHASED BY MOROCCAN MILITARY BECAUSE ONLY THEY RATHER THAN CIVILIANS HAD TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE TO EMPLOY IT. RADAR SYSTEM WOULD BE USED ABOUT NINETY PERCENT OF TIME FOR CIVILIAN PURPOSES AND ONLY TEN PERCENT FOR MILITARY. (COMMENT: ONLY A FEW RADARS WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR CIVIL AIR CONTROL, WHILE WESTINGHOUSE CONTRACT CALLS FOR 16.)

20. MRS. BENSON EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR ACHAHBAR'S EXPLANATION AND ANALYSIS. USG UNDERSTOOD THE THREAT AGAINST MOROCCO. SHE HAD RAISED A-10 NOT TO DISCOURAGE GOM, BUT TO MAKE IT AWARE OF U.S. POLICY, ADDING THAT THE USG WOULD APPROACH A MOROCCAN REQUEST WITH AN OPEN MIND AND WITH THE GREATEST FRIENDSHIP. (SPECIAL ASSISTANT STEPHEN LEDOGAR NOTED THAT WHILE A-10 NOT BEING FURNISHED TO ANY OTHER COUNTRY, RELEASE OF THE TECHNOLOGY HAD BEEN APPROVED FOR NATO COUNTRIES.) MRS. BENSON ADDED THAT WHEN PROVISION OF A PARTICULAR WEAPONS SYSTEM AROSE UNDER THE NEW ARMS SALES POLICY, THE PRESIDENT COULD MAKE AN EXCEPTION. SHE ALSO COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON MOROCCO'S INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE, WHICH HAD HELPED SAVE THE DAY.

21. PRESS COVERAGE. IN KEEPING WITH MRS. BENSON'S PREFERENCE FOR LOW-PROFILE VISIT, NO MEETINGS WITH THE PRESS WERE REQUESTED. PRESS COVERAGE WAS LIMITED TO PHOTOGRAPHY OF WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY.

22. THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN APPROVED BY MRS. BENSON.
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